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Guatemalan Campesinos

Justin Guimond

Regarding the campesinos of Guatemala, those people stripped of their land by plantation farmers who subsequently provide near-enslavement “employment” that removes husbands from their families by hundreds of miles. Although they are not a part of our sovereign nation, have we not made them our neighbours due to trade? The ‘real world’¹ is now a global neighbourhood, and in this regard we will likely hear the calling to be participants in not only trade partnerships, but broader communities.

There are striking similarities between the situation of the campesinos of Guatemala, and the fields of my European ancestry. As Irish, we had absentee landlords and unfair leases, which led to famine; starvation and exodus resulted, when there were abundant exports of grains². As British, we knew the unfair practices of industrial producers, and the concurrent necessity of labour unions to ensure the ‘preferential option for the poor’. As Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, we experienced corrupt government structures, public debt and lack of jobs, which led to the starvation, violent revolt, and persistent civil discontent and/or war. Just as the signs of the campesinos read, “¡Hunger means no peace!”³ The obligation of a society to provide for the poor and marginal is an important precept of a just society.

Some of the structures that were brought to Guatemala include a reliance on cash crops, a military culture that has procured gross violations of human dignity, and a lax regard by international trade partners of the violations of both God’s and man’s law (during and since the Guatemalan Civil War).

So, how are we to use the portion of understanding that we have been allotted? How shall we acknowledge the “conditions that led to the poverty, inequality, and injustice [...] in Guatemala”⁴ In “La Región de los 24 Diablos,”⁵ the

complex reality of the situation is exposed. Much like Christian apocalyptic literature, which reconciles the injustices of the world with the ultimate hidden reality of Heaven and earth,⁶ this dance exposes two sad realities: the lives of the persecuted, and the souls of their persecutors. Although many are born in the same huts, the parades of stark and painted military faces are a grim contrast to the mourning faces of campesinos and widows, who instead of parades, march protests... or funerals. And although it is the military pledge that sings out, “Our proud souls call us to die rather than to be slaves,”⁷ it is the campesinos that daily give their lives to this maxim, and they sing:

“Come my brothers;

There may be sadness, there may be sickness, there may be death.

¡Today our Lord is coming...

To give us happiness, to give us joy, to give us hope!”⁸



¹ Dean Brackley. (2006). Higher Standards. *America*, 194, 4, 9-13; 10.

² (During the Irish Potato Famine of 1845-50)

³ Mary Ellen Davis. (1991). *The Devil's Dream*, National Film Board of Canada, (protest sign of campesinos).

⁴ *Assignment sheet*, from 09-20-2007.

⁵ (A traditional dance of Guatemala)

⁶ Raymond E. Brown. (1997). *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, p. 8.

⁷ (Film); at approximately 55 minutes.

⁸ (Film); (Hymn at the mass said by Padre Tomás García † d. 1994).

Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church

By Leonardo Boff

Reviewed by J. Barrett Lee

Orbis Books: 1986, 115 pages

In this relatively brief work, one of the most prominent liberation theologians examines the ecclesiological significance of the basic church communities which emerged as a movement within Latin American Roman Catholicism in the wake of Vatican II. Boff draws attention to the challenges these communities present to the entire Roman Catholic Church as they seek to incarnate the Word of God in the context of their own historical surroundings.

Chapter one presents the basic church community as an important renewal movement within Catholicism. It will not replace the parochial model, but will awaken the church as a whole and stimulate growth by posing creative answers to difficult questions.

The second chapter examines the question of whether the basic church communities can justifiably be called “church” or do they merely contain “ecclesial elements”? Each particular church, according to Boff, incarnates the universal church. The next logical question is, “What constitutes a church?” Boff argues that the faith of the people, gathered in community, is what makes a church. Therefore, the basic church communities do indeed constitute church.

Chapter three examines some of the challenges and questions presented to the Church universal by these particular churches. Specifically, Boff re-examines the role of the clergy and the hierarchy in this context. In the basic church communities, the Spirit of God does not come down to the people through the ranks of the hierarchy, but emerges rather in the midst of the people. The role of the clergy and the hierarchy is to serve a facilitating role that empowers the people of God to hear and follow the voice of God as the Spirit speaks through them.

The fourth chapter chronicles the events of the Fourth Inter-Church Meeting of the Basic Communities of Brazil in 1981. Boff hails this conference as a

prophetic example of the basic church communities and the church hierarchy coming together in their common service of God. These two realities are not necessarily exclusive of or hostile toward each other. At this conference, the bishops and the people were able to support and empower each other as each sought to listen and contribute to the conversation.

The final three chapters consist of three “disputed questions” that have arisen from the experience of the basic church communities. The first of these three re-examines the question of Christ’s establishment of the Christian Church on earth. Christ, Boff argues, proclaimed the kingdom of God to the people of Israel. The Church was born out of the failure of Israel to respond to that message. Thus the Church, as a separate institutional reality, was not “willed” or “intended” by Christ, but was born out of the failure of the kingdom of God to take root in the people of Israel.

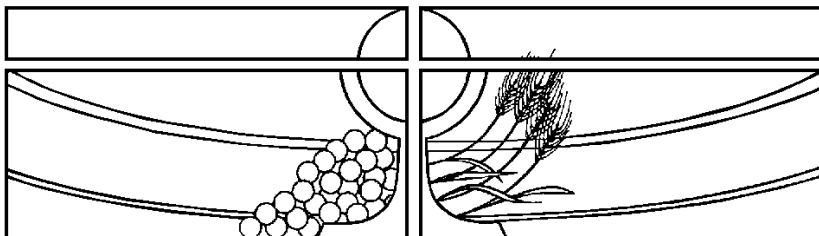
The second disputed question concerns the possibility of lay presidency over the Lord’s Supper in the absence of an ordained priest. Priests are in drastic short supply in Latin America, thus requiring that the laity step up and claim responsibility for their own spiritual lives. This has worked rather well on the whole, except that there is still lacking a sacramental element that is usually provided by a priest in the Mass. As a result, Boff argues for the establishment of a lay coordinator over a service of Bible study with the distribution of bread and wine, which should be called “the Lord’s Supper” rather than “the Mass”.

The final disputed question re-opens the issue of women’s ordination in the Roman Catholic Church, which has perennially bobbed to the surface every few years. The basic church communities, as they empower the whole people of God, have especially brought women into a more empowered place in the life of the community. However, the full participation of women in church life is blocked because of their inability to preside over the Sacraments. Their inclusion, according to Boff, would open the eyes of the community at large to see a new, feminine side of God which has been missed until now because of women’s exclusion from the altar.

Anyone coming to this book in search of a memoir or how-to manual on the life of the basic church communities will be sorely disappointed. Boff, while he addresses the historical and social context of his writing, focuses most of his

efforts on constructing an academic argument. I was hoping for more examples and stories from the life of these communities.

However, the points Boff raises are well-worth considering. He shows how the phenomenon of basic church communities in Latin America has the potential to create theological ripples throughout the worldwide church. I particularly appreciated Boff's point in the fifth chapter where he points out that the Church is essentially the product of the failure of the kingdom of God. This perspective helps to put to rest many of the age-old arguments that have split Christian communities for a millennium. If our current institutional state-of-being is the product of failure, then we are able to hold our own denominations, institutions, traditions, and beliefs lightly. We have the freedom to share ideas freely with one another and allow our differences to enrich, rather than destroy our fellowship. The fact that the Church is a product of failure means that the Church is also the community of grace. ✱



The Story of Nicolas Castro

Catechist and Minister of Holy Communion

Beloved Martyr in the Church on Pilgrimage in Guatemala

Translated from Spanish by Mother Emilie Smith

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in the Love of Christ,

I offer to you this inadequate translation with an overflowing heart, with a soul that delights in the honour of hearing and sharing these words.

Nicolas Castro

Born: Chola, El Quiche, Guatemala

Died: at about the age of 35, Chicaman, El Quiche.

Date of Death: September 29, 1980

Nicolas was a catechist and minister of Holy Communion for 20 years. He was also a health promoter, and he worked for the cooperative movement. He was a quiet man, friendly, honest and hard-working, who chatted with anyone that passed by. He had friends and acquaintances all over the place.

Halfway through the year 1980 gatherings were prohibited in the village oratories and chapels throughout most of the Diocese of Quiche. No one dared to go into the places of worship – they were afraid of being denounced as guerrillas, yet in some of the little villages in Chicaman, pastoral work only carried on through the great effort and commitment of faithful catechists.

Nicolas, always of a good nature and ready to take on the most difficult tasks, encouraged the community to stay together doing the work of the church. “If they don’t let us meet in the chapel, we will meet in the countryside, or in the caves, or at night in our homes. In these times of persecution, we need even more the Body of Christ to give us strength,” he said. Everyone in the community loved him, and they sought him out, because of his example and sacrifice. This is why he had a lot of godsons.

The events of 1980 were really hard for the people of Quiche, and above all for the Church. Remember, what happened in the Spanish Embassy on the 31 of January, then the systematic attack on different catechists and lay workers, and priests, sisters and brothers, and also Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The violent events in Nebaj, the machine gunning of the Convent in Uspantan, in May, the murder on the 4th of July of Fr. Jose Maria Gran and his sacristan, Domingo del Barrio Batz, the murder of Fr. Faustino Villanueva in the parish house of Joyabaj, the uncovering of the plan to kill the Bishop, Monsenor Juan Gerardi. As a result of these events in July and August the Diocese temporarily removed all of its clergy and religious. The Bishop himself thought that this act would allow the church to escape further persecution, but also allow them to denounce to the whole world the tragedies lived by the people of Quiche. Reality unfolded differently. The persecution of the church continued so

strongly that people began to hide all their religious objects and mementos, even their Bibles, anything that could show that they were catechists. Some of the military, the undercovers, when someone said “catechist”, they heard “guerrilla”. That’s why the catechists lived every moment in terror.

After July, 1980, there were no more priests in Quiche. They killed Frs. Jose Maria and Faustino, and those who remained – catechists and members of Catholic Action – ran serious risks. None-the-less, those faithful to the Word of God, as they have always done, decided to continue serving the people in the church. They decided that at least the Eucharist should stay as the centre of the community celebration. Something had to be done then, to get this “communion”.

Taking his life into his hands, Nicolas would go as far as Coban, looking for Communion, sometimes to San Cristobal Verapaz, well, the priests weren’t coming to his church in Chicaman. He would bring back the hosts carefully hidden among some tortillas that were a little dry, all carefully wrapped in a cloth napkin that he hid in his woven bag. Peasants usually carry a wool bag--who would have guessed that his was a precious bag – really a Holy Sacrament! Other times he hid the Communion in a sack of dried corn, and with a tump-line he carried it to his village.

There were many catechists who after July and August, 1980, traveled to the parishes closest to Coban to keep up their meetings of lay workers, and to receive as well the encouragement from priests that had been able to stay with their people. And like Nicolas, many of them also carried Communion to their villages to distribute at the community celebrations. They all took precautions in order not to be discovered, and a number of them hid the sacred hosts among the corn that they carried to their villages.

There is a priest who was witness to Nicolas, and tells this story of when he came to his parish seeking Communion. Nicolas said to him: “Forgive me Father, you know we are suffering in our community. We long for Communion, but if the army or the undercovers find me, they’ll kill me. That’s why I brought these tortillas, so if you could possibly hide the sacred hosts among them.” When I saw the faith and devotion of this man a knot rose in my throat – says the priest – and I couldn’t answer. I received the corn tortillas and I took them

to the altar. After Mass I went and hid eight or ten hosts between tortilla and tortilla. I wrapped them in the big napkin, and I gave it to him. With deep respect and veneration that good man took the Body of Christ, and slipped it into his woven bag.

Denounced...

Someone denounced him, saying he was a “bad man” and on September 29th, 1980, late at night some men arrived and pounded on his door. No one opened, so they knocked the door down, and burst into the humble house. It was after 11pm, say the witnesses. These “unknown men” tried to frighten Nicolas with their heavy weaponry. He hung on with all his might to the stove which was in the middle of the house, keeping the night’s embers and he yelled at them, “Kill me here, but do not take me!” He knew that they could torture him to get more names of other catechists, well, that’s what they always did. None-the-less, say the witnesses, he redoubled his efforts, but they grabbed him by the arm, and pulled him like as if he were a child out of the house.

They killed him out in the yard of his own house, with seven bullet holes in his spinal column, destroying his back.

While they were beating him, he cried out, “Oh, little ones, don’t do this to me”, as if they would pay attention to his pleas, and change their mind. He still believed in the humanity of his attackers.

When the soldiers left, he was still alive, and in the midst of the tragedy and helplessness, he wanted to give hope to his wife, Maria Hernandez, and his children. He spoke to his wife: -- Look after the children, I was never able to build them a very nice house. What will they say of me! – He also begged them:-- Don’t cry for me, I’m going to die, but I know that I’m going to be resurrected. Don’t change religion. Look after the little ones.—The extreme pain at last broke his strength, he cried out and sank to the earth in tears and blood.

His generous heart, full of faith that was always prepared to answer to God’s desires, just like Stephen in the Book of Acts, brought him strength one last time and he was able to recite with faith and confidence in God the prayer, Our

Father. "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come". Nicolas wasn't able to finish the prayer that he had said so often in his life. Surrounded by his wife and children, overcome with pain, he died.

Those who knew him declare: "We can say that he died, gazing on the Glory of God, well, he never abandoned his faith in Jesus when he was under threat."

Nicolas is a witness to Jesus, a witness to His life and His truth. We could say that he died defenseless and poor, but as a courageous witness of his faith, whose depth reminds us of those first Christians, the martyrs of the first century. With Nicolas, as with no other, one could say: "the righteous and the wise, their deeds are in the hands of God" (Eccle.9.1). ❀



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Chris Rooney
Karl Germyn
Editors, The Christian Radical

Sleeping with Friends
Melissa Sillitoe
August 2007 / Manzanita, OR



At 37, I discover love
without one who
penetrates, keeps.

A new position!
I sleep near, not above,
not beneath. No one

inside me. My own
heartbeat tide takes me
to dream plunge.

Held by my own
inhale, we are moored
in tonight's dark pool,

their inhale not mine,
not becoming mine ever,
when we leave harbor

tomorrow clutching our
separate dreams,
we fear nothing.

You are not mine.

It's impossible to lose each other.

On the Proper Use of Relativism

Leonardo Boff
June 20 2008

Today, through the mass media, images and peoples from all over the world come in from the roof tops, the doors and windows, and coexist with us. It is the effect of the globalized networks of communication. The first reaction is perplexity, that could provoke two attitudes: interest in knowing them better, which implies openness and dialogue, or distancing, that presupposes closing the spirit and excluding them. Either way, an undeniable perception occurs: our form of being is not the only one. There are human beings who, without ceasing to be human, are different. This is to say, our way of being, of inhabiting the world, of thinking, of valuing and of eating, is not absolute. There are thousands of other forms of being human, from the ways of the Siberian Eskimo, through the Yanomamis from Brazil, all the way to the sophisticated inhabitants of closed condominiums, where opulent and terrified elites protect themselves. The same can be said about the differences of cultures, languages, religions, ethics and leisure.

From this immediately appears relativism in two forms: first, it is important to see as relative all ways of being; none is absolute to the point of invalidating the others; an attitude of respect and of welcoming of the difference is also necessary, because, for the simple fact of being here, they have the right to exist and co-exist. Second, relativity also seeks to express the fact that all are in one way related to the other. They cannot be thought of independently of each other because are all carriers of the same humanity. We have to widen, then, the understanding of the human beyond our own concrete expression. We are one geo-society, unitary, multiple, and different.

All these human manifestations carry value and truth. But they are a relative value and truth, this is to say, one related to the others, self implicated, given that none, taken by itself, is absolute.

Then, is there no absolute truth? Is there value in the "every thing goes" of some postmodernists? No, it does not mean that everything has value. Everything has value to the extent that it relates with others, respectful of their differences. Each

is carrier of truth, but no-one has a monopoly on the truth. All, in one way or the other, participate in the truth, but they can grow towards a more complete truth, to the extent that they open up more and more to each other.

The Spanish poet Antonio Machado put it well: «Your truth, no; The truth, and come with me to seek it. As to yours, keep it.» If together we seek truth, in dialogue and cordiality, then more and more my truth disappears, letting The Truth, accepted by all, take its place.

The illusion of the West is in imagining that the only window that gives access to the truth, to the true religion, to authentic culture and to critical knowledge, is its way of seeing and of living, and that the other windows only show distorted landscapes. The West condemns itself to a visceral fundamentalism that in the past has led it to cause massacres to impose its religion, and now, wars, to force democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We ought to make good use of relativism, inspired by culinary art. There is only one culinary art, the one that prepares human nourishment. But it takes many forms, in diverse gastronomy: the Mineira or the Nordestina in Brazil, the Japanese, the Chinese, the Mexican and others. No one can say that one is true and exquisite and not the others. All are exquisite in their own way, and all of them show the extraordinary versatility of the culinary art. Why should it be different with the truth? ❀



Star Wars or Peace at Home?

Ricardo Peres – São Paulo,
June 2008

Humanity is at a crossroads and must choose one of two routes to pursue a way of life in the 21st century: War in Space or Peace on Earth.

It is fully understood that the present situation on Earth is precarious and war ridden due to a systematic denial of our inescapable dependence on Nature. Indeed, the conflicts between the natural limits of the Earth and our notions of growth, economic development and progress are well established by the “developed world” – continental USA and Europe – which has destroyed 99% of its own original forests^o in the course of the last few centuries, thus incurring irreparable loss of biodiversity. However, the hidden face of growth emerges everywhere:

- a) 66.7% of our tropical and 75% of our temperate forests have been destroyed¹;
- b) 90% of potable water for human consumption is polluted²;
- c) 20% of our coral reefs are dead, and 20% more are currently dying, while coral reefs are home for 65% of oceanic species¹;
- d) 33% of the Earth’s territory is on its way to become a desert¹;
- e) 11 of the 17 sea fishing reserves have collapsed¹;
- f) Three-quarters of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops are already lost³;
- g) 150 species of flora and fauna go extinct every day, a rate that is 100 to 1000 times higher than a natural dying out of species, according to scientists³;
- h) 60% of all ecosystem services are degraded, causing accelerated species extinction and huge losses in genetic diversity³.

Also, the hidden face of growth shows that economic development is a most effective tool of wealth concentration and social differentiation:

- a) 2.8 billion human beings are presently living in abject poverty, without food, housing or basic health care*;
- b) 95% of the sewer volume in poor countries remains untreated²;
- c) The wealth held by the top 250 richest people on Earth is equal to the wealth held by the bottom 40% of humanity – almost 3 billion souls*;
- d) The 3 richest families on Earth retain an amount equal to the GDP of 49 countries put together*.

In summary, our **collective experience** has shown that the more economically viable the activity, the more socially and environmentally unviable it is. With the growth of the world's wealth currently showing a \$60 trillion GDP, is it any wonder that we have a world in conflict, infested with wars, famine and desperation? Yet, instead of rethinking obsolete notions and devising ways to develop in sync with the natural limits of the Earth, a group of powerful world leaders are now resolved to perpetuate the unsustainable growth that generated the deplorable scenario above. This time, however, they want to do it by controlling Space, from where they intend to navigate with the same old and defective economic compass.

It is remarkable that in the last 200 years no politician bothered to observe that neither the territory nor the mass of the Earth actually increase with time, for our planet does not exchange matter with the rest of the universe, but only energy. As a result, if all citizens were to have a developed-world standard of living, we would need at least three Earths to provide for all. That alone is sufficient to prove that the neoliberal technological promise to export a decent standard of living to humanity has been but a well marketed lie all along.

No less remarkable is the connivance of organized religion when it comes to human overpopulation, the most essential cause of our present troubles. Today the ceiling of human growth on the planet has become irrefutable, or at least as tangible as the above mentioned neoliberal failure to deliver its promise to almost three billion souls living in

destitution. To be sure, there is a great deal of talk about the sacredness of life “at conception”, but no talk at all about the sacredness of the experience of life following conception. It is curious that the notion of life could be condensed into “before” and “after” life itself, while the “during” part of the equation does not appear in the spiritual lexicon of religion.

Considering the above, it is clear that we must urgently change our strategy, particularly our production and consumption culture, if our species is to survive on Earth. For, in reality, it is not the Earth that is in danger, but humanity, since our survival is underpinned by the Earth's ecosystem services, which we continue to destroy by the minute. We are literally destroying 21 hectares of forests (ie: 42 soccer fields) and 50 tons of fertile soil at every minute** in the name of progress.

Nonetheless, the USA military industrial complex, with the support of its clients around the globe and tax money from US citizens – the US military now controls just over 50% of every federal tax dollar – is planning to further this sorry state of affairs through the hegemonic control of Space. Their goal is to increase domination over the Earth's biodiversity and resources in order to satisfy their appetite for more growth and more power at the expense of Life. If so, there is little doubt that warfare would become the modus operandi thereafter, possibly till the last human breath before the end of the century as environmental collapse disrupts the biological services that have kept us alive for millions of years.

On the other hand, while the challenges on Earth are many, at least here at home we stand a chance to attain peace. It will require a lot of imagination, courage and discipline as we demand from world leaders that the true value of Biodiversity be incorporated into policy decisions. It will require a new value system; new economic and pricing systems that take Nature's stock into account. It will take equitable governance, voluntary simplicity and sacrifices all around. Above all, it will take us to

recognize that we are all children of Biodiversity and that all our systems represent a subsystem of Nature. We have much to reckon with and ought to waste no time if we are really serious about Peace. Are we?

If so, a cohesive movement for **Peace on Earth** must be pursued diligently in order to convince the world's population that it is **in fact possible to establish an alternative to the Star Wars Program**. We would need a robust structure for fundraising, a Secretariat to produce documents embracing political, scientific and spiritual content, as well as a network to organize and promote concerted events and non-violent public manifestations of all sorts, like marches for Peace, collective hunger strikes, civil disobedience and market disengagement campaigns. The challenge is immense given that adhesion to the movement would entail deliberate understanding and direct involvement of hundreds of millions of people around the world willing to focus on a single objective: Peace on Earth.

Finally, I leave you with one of Otto von Bismarck's most notable observations, which in my view sums up the degree of the challenge in front of us: *Nobody wants war, but nobody is willing to live without those things that only war can bring*. It seems to me that our duty at this critical stage is to do all we can to prove that Bismarck was wrong. ✱

° D. Bryant, et al. – World Resources Institute

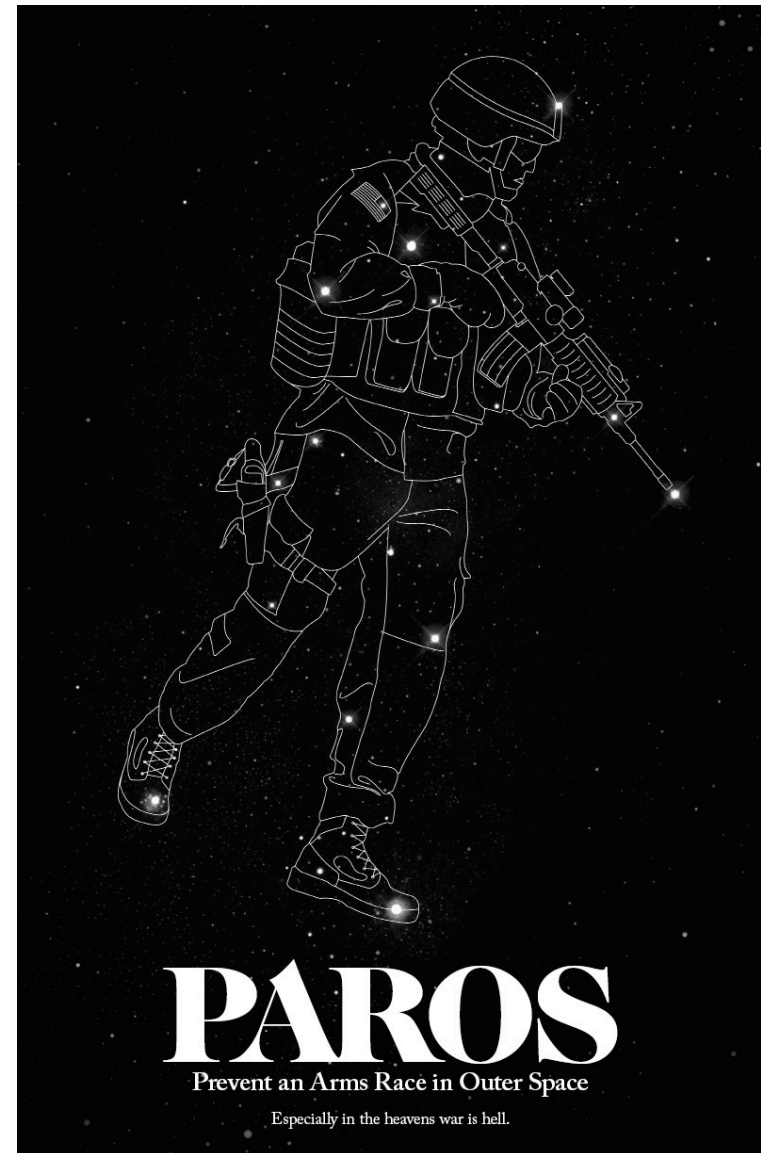
¹ Lester Brown – Worldwatch Institute

² Erwin Laszlos: Macrotransition

³ UN Convention on Biodiversity, Bonn 2008

* World Bank, 2002

**Lester Brown: Ecoeconomics



The True Place for a Just Man

Incarceration as the price of conscience

Mark Dixon

In his lectures at the Concord Lyceum in 1848, Henry David Thoreau compared government to a machine. When the product of that machine became injustice, he said, it was the duty of conscientious citizens to resist and even interfere: "let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine." Democracy, he said, needs conscience more than obedience. These lectures formed the basis for his 1849 essay "Civil Disobedience."

But Thoreau did not hide the fact that the exercise of conscience to interfere with the machinery of power carries consequences. He stated flatly, "the government will retaliate." That knowledge led him to live simply with few possessions, "because I therefore have less to lose."

Even when we have little money or material possessions to lose, we nevertheless stand to lose our freedom, or even our lives. There are occasions in today's world when the struggle to literally "stop the machine" leads to violent tragedy, as when Rachel Corrie, a member of the International Solidarity Movement, peacefully stood her ground unarmed as an Israeli bulldozer threatened to demolish a Palestinian home, and was crushed to death when the soldier operating the bulldozer refused to stop.

Fines and incarceration are handed down in quiet courtrooms far from the scene of upheaval, often by judges who seem to believe their mandate is to preserve the status quo at any cost, and are swift to punish any challenge to authority. Maryknoll Father Roy Bourgeois said of one judge, "It baffles me how he [U.S. magistrate G. Mallon Faircloth] can sleep at night when an 88-year-old nun [Sr. Dorothy Hennessey] is going to prison." Activists understandably waver as the specter of jail time costs them wages and keeps them from their families. Yet conscience often leaves us little choice.

Martin Buber wrote of that decisive moment when the abstract struggle against power and the enemies of truth becomes one's own concrete struggle. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., paraphrasing Thoreau, wrote that "evil must be resisted, and no moral man can patiently adjust to injustice."



civil disobedience reveal a coherent set of motivations which together begin to form a persuasive philosophy.

Civil disobedience can be a means of identifying with, and standing in solidarity with, the oppressed. In his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote that "we know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, but must be demanded by the oppressed. When you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society ... then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait." Under a government which imprisons unjustly, Thoreau wrote, "the true place for a just man is also a prison." Fr. Carl Kabat, an Oblate priest and anti-nuclear protester who has spent considerable time in prison for his activities, goes further and says "the future monasteries of the Catholic church should be the prisons." This theme is echoed by Fr. Frank Cordaro of the Des Moines, Iowa Catholic Worker, who has spent a total of 38 months behind bars for his activism and civil disobedience. He titled one of his lectures "Why More Christians Should Be In Jail."

One's refusal to be complicit in the unjust acts of empire can take the form of civil disobedience. Josephite Fr. Philip Berrigan and his brother, Jesuit Fr. Daniel Berrigan, were among the first priests in the United States sentenced to

Such steps cannot be taken lightly or for frivolous reasons. The decision to publicly disobey government and violate a law when the immediate threat of arrest and imprisonment is present must be one motivated by deep conviction, that unshakeable moral courage that requires no further proof or evidence. The writings and public statements of activists and religious both within and outside the Catholic Worker movement who have gone to prison as a consequence of their

prison for civil disobedience when they burned draft records in 1968 in Catonsville, MD. Fr. Martin Newell accepted a prison sentence as the consequence when he believed that to pay his fine "would be to cooperate with a system that is fueling murder and mayhem around the world." Refusal to acquiesce to the fine, was to Newell a "refusal to go along quietly with manifest evil."

Traditionally, civil disobedience has been a means of challenging unjust laws. Dr. King wrote that "there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws."

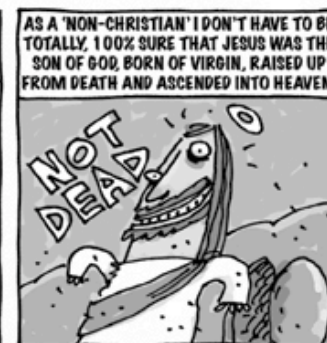
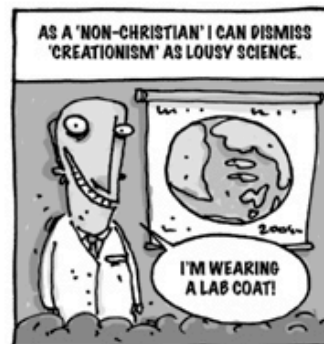
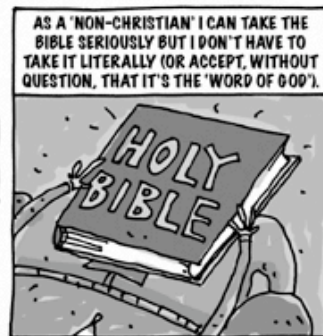
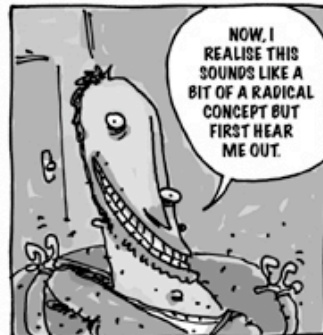
Obeying God and one's conscience may require of us civil disobedience. When sentenced for her part in disrupting an international military arms show in her native UK, Zelda Jeffers of the London Catholic Worker explained, "[my] action was not criminal but my duty as a human being. How can I not try to stop this going on?" Long-time activist and Catholic bishop Thomas Gumbleton of archdiocese of Detroit has said that for Catholics, "if the civil law is not in accord with God's law, then it's not really a valid law." He went on to say that he "could not conceive of an act of civil disobedience without it coming out of prayer." Scott Schaeffer-Duffy, jailed for a 2005 demonstration at a Sudanese embassy to protest the genocide in Darfur, said that "I could not face my children, I could not face myself, I could not in the end face my God, unless I really put myself on the line to stop this."

Some see civil disobedience as a form of free speech and raising public awareness. Ruthy Woodring of the St. Francis Catholic Worker community in Chicago said that "I felt I had to express with my body what my head thought. Crossing the line was one way of saying how strongly I felt. Maybe I would go to prison, but that is nothing like what the people in Latin America have suffered. Civil disobedience is something I can do." After her release from jail, Woodring said "I think it was important for me as a young person to experience prison so that I can act on it for the rest of my life. I'm actually glad now that I am able to talk about the prison experience from a prisoner's point of view."

Civil disobedience may be undertaken to prevent a moral crime from occurring. Michael Yarrow of the American Friends Service Committee saw preventing the murder of Iraqi civilians as his "duty under the Nuremberg principles, international law and shared moral standards. Starting wars, certainly wars when one's country is not under attack, is a war crime. We must prevent this crime if we can." His civil disobedience against the war, he said, "was my desperate attempt to stop a crime from occurring. What else would you have me do?"

Finally, when all other avenues have been exhausted, direct action in the form of civil disobedience can be a means of forcing the question. Dr. King believed that without forceful direct action, the goal of civil rights might never be achieved. "Justice delayed is justice denied," King wrote, quoting 19th century British statesman William Gladstone. "For years now, I have heard the word 'wait,'" King explained. "It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This 'wait' has almost always meant 'never.'" ❄

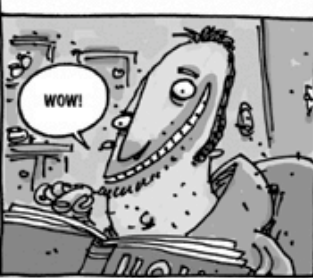




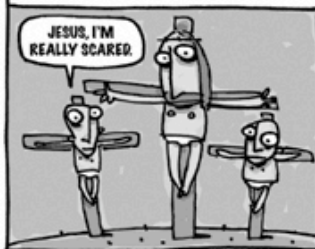
AS A 'NON-CHRISTIAN' I CAN ADMIT THAT I DON'T HAVE A 'PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP' WITH JESUS (WHATEVER THAT MEANS).



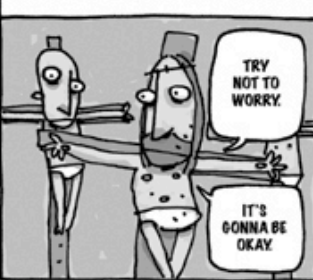
AND THEN MAYBE I COULD GET TO KNOW JESUS WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED.



BECAUSE THE LIFE OF JESUS IS STILL THE BEST EXAMPLE I'VE FOUND OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR PEOPLE AND CONNECTION WITH THE MYSTERY OF GOD.



AND THAT'S THE KIND OF LIFE EVEN A 'NON-CHRISTIAN' WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE.



'Whatever diminishes life is evil, and whatever enhances life is good'.

PRAYER OF A WOULD BE 'NON-CHRISTIAN'

DEAR GOD, THERE'S JUST SO MUCH ABOUT 'CHRISTIANITY' THAT SHITS ME TO TEARS! AND THERE'S A BIG PART OF ME THAT WOULD BE HAPPY TO LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND. BUT I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT I AM TOTALLY SMITTEN WITH JESUS. I LOVE THE GUY! I LOVE THE WAY HE REACHED OUT TO THE 'UNLOVABLE' WITH RECKLESS ABANDONMENT, HOW HE WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT JUSTICE AND HOW HE DEFENDED PEOPLES RIGHT TO COME BEFORE GOD. PLEASE HELP ME TO FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS. AMEN.

THE NEXT STEP

I'm not really sure but here's what I plan to do :

1. Go to church if I feel like it's helping me to connect with God, increasing my capacity to love people (including myself) or if I'm in the mood for a good fight.
2. Read the bible critically. Embracing the verses that enhance life (and love) and rejecting the text that has been used (and is used) to hurt people.
3. Try and take time to pray, meditate or do whatever helps me to connect with the sacred.
4. Remain committed to the loving, non-violent teaching of Jesus and try to get to know him better.

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Regard For The Soil

An easy essay by Peter Maurin

1. Andrew Nelson Lytle says:

The escape from industrialism is not in socialism or in sovietism.

2. The answer lies

in a return to a society where agriculture is practised by most of the people.

3. It is in fact impossible for any culture to be sound and healthy without a proper regard for the soil, no matter

how many urban dwellers think that their food comes from groceries and delicatessens or their milk from tin cans.

4. This ignorance

does not release them from a final dependence upon the farm.

In Memory of the South Central Los Angeles Farm

Given to the people in 1992

Stolen from the people in 2006



All of the photography in this issue except for Peter Maurin's Easy Essay was generously contributed by James Rodriguez, a Guatemalan photo-journalist who was recommended to our zine by Mother Emilie. More of James' work can be seen on his website www.mimundo.org

We Believe So We Speak

2ND CORINTHIANS 4:13

Justin Guimond is a 23 year old student who recently completed a Diploma in Liberal Arts at Corpus Christi College in Vancouver, B.C. He is an active member of the Knights of Columbus.

J. Barrett Lee is a graduate of Regent College in Vancouver, BC. He lives in central New York with his wife Sarah, a Presbyterian minister, and works at the Rescue Mission of Utica. Barrett is also a Deacon in the Free Episcopal Church, an inclusive, independent Anglican denomination. www.free-episcopal.org

Mother Emilie Smith is an Anglican minister and Liberation Theologian who serves at St. James Church in Vancouver's Downtown East Side of. She spends her life between Guatemala and Canada working for social justice.

Melissa Sillitoe lives in Portland, and loves her grey-sky city. Her parish, the Downtown Chapel, takes care of her mentally ill and addicted neighbors. She's active in the DIY art/writing scene and runs a gallery out of her living room. She tries to live out her Catholic Worker faith in her everyday life.

Leonardo Boff is a Brazilian Liberation Theologian and former Catholic Priest who was repeatedly silenced by the Church for his writing and because of his work on behalf of the people. This essay has been translated from the original Spanish and sent by Melina Alfaro, it was translated at Refugio Del Rio Grande, Texas.

Ricardo Peres is an Environmentalist and Musician. Born in 1966 in Brazil, Ricardo lived in the USA, Canada and Switzerland while conducting a career as a concert pianist. He is the father of two boys and presently lives in São Paulo, Brazil.

Mark Dixon is a member of the extended Catholic Worker community in Los Angeles California, he also maintains an online magazine of Christian discipleship, Unworthy Magazine. www.unworthymagazine.blogspot.com

Dean Rankine is a part-time Community Development Worker with a Needle and Syringe Program and part-time cartoonist. His comics have appeared in publications worldwide. You can see more of his work online at - www.webcomicsnation.com/deanrankine

Peter Maurin b. May 9, 1877 d. 1949 was visionary and co-founder with Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker movement. He lived his whole life in holy poverty and though he never wrote a book of his own his "Easy Essays" form a cornerstone of the movement's philosophy.